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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JANUARY 1st, 1865.

BISHOP'S GLEES.

By G. A. MACFARREN.

(Continued from page 412.)

"THE silver queen," for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment, is from *Zuma*. The singers are supposed to belong to a tribe of South American Indians; further than which, nothing of the dramatic situation is revealed in the words, whose purport, however, seems to point at some circumstance in the story of the drama, that might, if known, add interest to the music: some such accessory is needed; for the repetition of the entire text with an entire change of music appears singularly to unfit the piece for stage effect; and the flowing, but characterless phrases, want significance to render them impressive in chamber performance.

"Welcome, great and glorious king," for two sopranos, tenor, and bass, doubled sometimes in chorus, with accompaniment, is from a *Grand Triumphal Ode* in honour of the first anniversary of the accession of George IV. When this Ode was produced, Thackeray had not lectured on the Four Georges, nor had the British public gained such independence as might have enabled them to feel, much less acknowledge, the estimate of the last and least of those royal namesakes, which the lamented moralist has since fearlessly promulgated with the whole world's acquiescence; we may suppose, therefore, that in 1821 some people thought favorably of the reigning monarch, or thought it expedient to say they did, and to them the fulsome adulation of the Triumphal Ode might not appear to be such deep irony as it does to a reader of the present day. The music is pompous, uninspired, but well written—it fits the theme. Rarely, most rarely, have works of art been successful as such when they have been produced as acts of homage, courtiership, and praise of high powers on public occasions; some greater composers than Bishop, and many inferior to him, have failed under similar circumstances, and it is thus little to wonder that he planted no evergreen for his fame in writing his Triumphal Ode.

"The idol of our hopes and fears," for two sopranos, alto, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment that may be omitted, is an Elegy on the Princess Charlotte. It is smooth and harmonious, but its interest passed away with the national regret it was designed to express.

"The Savoyard, from clime to clime," a soprano solo, with a refrain for chorus in four parts, the second of three verses being harmonized as a quartett, and the whole having in-

strumental accompaniment, is from Sheridan Knowles' play of *William Tell*. This seems to aim at national character, but has more quaintness than beauty.

"While the moon shines bright," a kind of Dirge, for bass solo, alternated with quartett for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, the voices being doubled in chorus at the conclusion, with accompaniment, is from *Montoni, or The Phantom*. The music has little solemnity, and less pathos; and is, indeed, unworthy of Mr. Planché's graceful verses.

"Why stays he now?" originally a quintett, but compressed, without injury, in the Complete Collection for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment, is from *Harry le Roi*, an adaptation by Pocock of the old drama of The Miller of Mansfield, though, with strange inaccuracy, the words, such as they are, are ascribed to Haynes Bayley, in the collected edition. The music is not undramatic, but commonplace in the extreme.

"Who first will strike the deer?" for four male voices, sometimes doubled in chorus, with accompaniment, is from *Aladdin*. I am not prepared to say that the Orientals do not chase the deer, however I may question the fact; but I will aver that they do not so with the accompaniment of French horns, singing to the same a Hunting Glée in the conventional phraseology that has been used and abused by European composers from time immemorial; yet such is the piece under notice, and the Opera whence it is extracted has Persians for its characters, and Ispahan for its chief scene of action.

"To see his face," a Round for four tenors—the fifth time of the theme, when it reverts to the first voice, the parts being doubled in chorus—with accompaniment, is one of the interpolations in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The ingenuity was greater than the good taste of extracting four lines from one of the poems, and inserting them with forced fitness in a situation to which they have no natural pertinence. The Outlaws' admiration of Valentine seems to be the only sentiment in the Comedy to which, however violently, the passage could be appropriated. The character of the Round is commonplace, but the counterpoint is clever, and the several parts relieve each other with good effect.

"Welcome, welcome!" an accompanied Quintett for three sopranos and two tenors, with chorus for female voices, is the finale to the first act in *Brother and Sister*. It is fluent, though trite, extremely high for the first solo voice, and better suited to the stage than the chamber or concert room.

"Though he be now a grey, grey friar," for two sopranos, two tenors, and bass, with accompaniment, is from *Maid Marian*. Four of the voices have successively a solo, and then the five conjoin in extolling some worthy unnamed, who continues his secular gaieties now that he

has taken holy orders. The music well assorts in character to the rest of the Opera, but is not equal in merit to some of the pieces.

"With rapture transported," for two sopranos, alto, three tenors, and bass, with accompaniment, is from *Zuma*. This is extracted from a longer concerted piece, wherein a stolen child is recovered by its parents; it is a careful specimen of part-writing, with richness of effect proportionate to the number of voices.

"Allegiance we swear," a soprano solo, with chorus for the ordinary distribution of four voices, and with accompaniment, is from *Henri Quatre*. It must have been a rare voice for which this piece was written, wherein the high A has to be sustained for many successive bars, and yet the chief part of the cantilena ranges from an octave to a twelfth below this note; and here it may not be inopportune to notice, with some wonder, the extremely wide compass demanded for the execution of many of Bishop's solo parts, those for tenor reaching sometimes to two octaves, and those for soprano having frequently articulated syllables upon successive notes above the staff; whence may be inferred, either that he wrote for vocalists of extraordinary capacity, or that he knew not how to write for those who were to sing his music. Granting the former inference, it is obvious that such singers as Incedon, Sinclair, and Braham, as Stephens, Matthews, Dickons, and M. Tree, have no vocal representatives in the present generation. Has then the art died out in England of cultivating the voice, or is nature at fault in producing now no more such vocal organisations as those with which our fathers were gifted? More might be said in another place upon this matter; it is now to remark upon the piece before us, in which the famed Gabrielle speeds her royal lover on his campaign—it is picturesque and varied.

"Daughter of Error," also a soprano solo with chorus, and with accompaniment, is from *Zuma*. The heroine has broken some bond of the nature of a vestal vow, and is to be immolated accordingly. If the music have neither the pathos nor the solemnity which should fit it for the situation, it has the twofold merit of melodiousness and harmonic fulness.

"Hark, the merry bells ring round," another soprano solo with chorus, but in this case for four female voices, and with accompaniment, is from *The Doom Kiss*. It is pretty, and this virtue is enhanced by its unhacknied metre, which indeed makes its chief melody striking.

"Lads and Lasses one and a'," a chorus for four male and female voices, relieved by a soprano solo, with accompaniment, is from *The Battle of Bothwell Brigg*, a dramatic adaptation of Scott's *Old Mortality*. A bad imitation of a Scotch tune, vulgarising its salient characteristics, and bungling over those peculiarities which are a stumbling block to modern harmony;

it is a piece as little creditable to the composer's fancy as to his skill.

"Gather each flower," a chorus for four male and female voices, with solos for two sopranos, and with accompaniment, is from *Maid Marian*. Graceful and gay, and full of tune, this is a worthy fruit of one of Bishop's very happiest periods.

"Loud let the Moorish tambour," a chorus for two female and three male voices, having solos for two sopranos, with accompaniment, is from *The Fall of Algiers*. It is light, and in close imitation of what is conventionally accepted as Morisco melody; the Opera to which it belongs was the first the composer wrote for Drury Lane Theatre, when an increase of terms had induced him to quit the rival establishment, where all his real successes were achieved.

"Here Aladdin," a chorus in two parts, for female voices, varied by solos for soprano and tenor, with accompaniment, is from *Aladdin*. It is as trivial as it is long, and long as it is uninteresting. Its dramatic purport cannot be understood from the words, and is certainly not expressed by the music.

"Bright Orb," a chorus for the ordinary four voices—including a trio for two sopranos and tenor, "Behold the deity"—with accompaniment, is from *The Virgin of the Sun*. The early work whence this is taken is one of the most ambitious of Bishop's productions; the present piece is well written, and there are some good effects from the blending of the solo voices with the chorus in the second movement, but the whole wants life for the stage and melody for the concert-room.

"From burning Afric!" a chorus for four voices—including a trio, "How beats my heart," for two ladies and tenor—with accompaniment, is from *Native Land*. This could make no effect off the stage, and I think not much upon it; let me except, however, from such generalisation the movement for solo voices, wherein the tenor is combined in a novel manner with the soprano and contralto, so that this part maintains its individuality while enforcing the interest of the other two. One is amused at the forgetfulness—it could have been nothing else—that allowed so practised a composer and experienced a musician to appropriate, even in its original key, the remarkable harmonic progression that opens the allegro of the overture to *Don Giovanni*, and has been the basis of many a theoretical discussion; here it is, however, as the initial and frequently recurrent phrase of the present piece, and with a skip in the bass voice part which may be interpreted as Bishop's vote on one side of the dispute as to the harmonic root whence the combination with its remarkable progression is derived. With such decided views upon this point, could he have been quite unmindful of the situation wherein it was first presented to his speculation? *Native Land* was

written for the re-appearance of Sinclair, who had spent some time in Italy, and, while there, been the original representative of the tenor in Rossini's *Semiramide*, whose two very florid arias are now always omitted.

"Let the lively banja"—including the unaccompanied trio for two sopranos and tenor, "Rapture without alloy"—is the finale to the first act of *Zuma*, and comprises an intermixture of solos and chorus. It anticipates the extreme of commonplace that signalises many of the too popular Christy Minstrelsies, and its length as a composition scarcely gives it importance; the episodical trio relieves well the rest, by its musical pretension, no less than by its vocal effect.

"Blame me not, lady," for soprano, contralto, bass, and chorus of four voices, with accompaniment, is the finale to the first act of *The Law of Java*. With far less pretension than many, this piece is marked by a tone of higher musical feeling than the average—I might say, than almost any—of the author's compositions; musically speaking, its felicitous and novel vocal combinations, its unhacknied phrases, its obvious character, and its varied coloring, would be certain to charm whomever heard it; it can only be, then, the obscurity of its dramatic purport, with the consequent impossibility of following its interest, that excludes it from the concert-room, while the revolution that has taken place in the English lyrical drama will for evermore keep Colman's so-called Opera, in which it occurs, from the stage.

"Long life to the Count," for tenor solo and chorus of four voices, with accompaniment, is the introduction to *The Romance of a Day*. This has much more true dramatic spirit than most of Bishop's writing for the stage—it lives and moves with the action of the scene, whereas the majority of his theatrical pieces are at the best characteristic pictures, that would better fit a Cantata than any situation where the grouping and dispersion of the singers had to give vitality to a progressive story. It is fresh and bright, and deserves to be oftener heard than the opportunities of our time are likely to allow it to be.

"Bright lady, sweet mistress," for bass solo and chorus of four voices, with accompaniment, is from *The Noble Outlaw*. The action is here protracted, and the music has not interest to give it a claim to attention apart from the scene.

"Is it the tempest?" for two sopranos, tenor, bass, and chorus of the same four voices, with accompaniment, is a long and varied scene from *The Virgin of the Sun*. Allusion has been made to the ambitious character of this work; the piece under notice not only aims at importance, but veritably attains it. The action it involves is not of a nature that necessarily depends upon stage arrangement for its clearness to an audience; the threatening of the storm, the travellers' demand for shelter, the reluctant

compliance with their request, the bursting of the tempest, its momentary lull, and its renewal with redoubled terrors, are all told obviously in the words; and with these printed in the programme, the music might be equally interesting and effective in a concert performance. Its length would well justify its insertion in a conspicuous place in any of the concerts of our secular choral societies, and its merit would quite as well support this justification.

"Merry boys, away," the finale to the first act of *The Maniac*, is for two sopranos, tenor and bass solo, and chorus of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment. It is singularly trite and commonplace in its ideas, but it has the merit of clear and varied design, which is more generally apparent in Bishop's earlier than in his later productions. The Opera to which this belongs was performed by the Drury Lane Company, in the interval between the burning and re-building of their theatre, at the English Opera House or Lyceum, where they had a temporary shelter. S. J. Arnold (the stage manager of the company, and the proprietor of their theatre of refuge,) was the author of the book.

"Home, there's a storm," a chorus for soprano, two tenors, and bass, having solos for each voice, and also for mezzo-soprano, with accompaniment, seems to have been written for the stage; but I cannot trace the work to which it belongs; it contains little that is remarkable, save only its length.

"Joy, joy, raise the shout," a chorus for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment, is from *The Ethiop*. The drama for which this was written being unsuccessful, an altered version was produced under the name of "Haroun Alraschid," with little better fortune. The present piece was then omitted, but the play seems to have gained nothing by its loss.

"Lo! in the Orient," a Glee for four male voices, doubled sometimes in chorus, with accompaniment, is one of the interpolations in *As you like it*. Spirited beyond question, but lacking the charm of some of its kindred pieces, this leaves nothing to regret in the decadence of the custom of cramming Shakspeare's Comedies with lines from his sonnets, in order to transform the plays into dramatic concerts.

"Live to us," a chorus for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with accompaniment, probably belongs to some larger work, of whose title I find no evidence, and regret no loss; the piece is pompous, and the words are laudatory of some anonymous sovereign power.

"Now tramp o'er moss and fell," known as the "Tramp Chorus," for four female and male voices, and solo for soprano, with accompaniment, is from *The Knight of Snowdown*, a dramatic version of Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, adapted by Thomas Morton, the once very popular dramatist, whose *Speed the Plough*, and whose

constantly successful son, with *Box and Cox*, and a tribe of such rampant grandchildren of the parent stock, still remind the world of his once wide celebrity. That this piece is well known may be taken as token of its good effect; to this, the facility of the choral parts, and the showyness of the solo mainly contribute.

"O fill the wine cup," an accompanied chorus for four female and male voices, with some passages for solo singers, may, to judge from its character and form, belong to a theatrical piece, the name of which I cannot learn. It is hilarious certainly, but savours a little of vulgarity; the sentiment—that "Good night" sounds sweetest from wine-stained lips—is, however, of questionable fitness for lady voices, and thus the composition cannot be extensively available.

"O now the Bezeestien is merry," an accompanied chorus for four female and male voices, with solos for soprano and bass, is from *The Ethiop*. This represents the bustle of a bazaar in "Bagdat" (thus the spelling in the text), which is interrupted by the proclamation of an edict similar to our law of the curfew, and resumed with its wonted animation; it is more characteristic than beautiful.

"Shout for the monarch," an accompanied chorus for four voices, is the concluding finale in *Maid Marian*. It is a song in honour of Richard I., whose casting off a disguise brings about the denouement of the story; the music is appropriate to the situation, but, detached from this, has little interest.

"Spirits advance," a recitative for tenor, introducing "Come, follow, follow me," a solo for soprano, chorus and quartett, with accompaniment, is one of the interpolations in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is charmingly melodious; and though essentially human in all its forms of expression, one may contentedly forgive its false pretensions to fairydom for the sake of its true claims to mortal sympathies.

"Vengeance we swear," the finale to the second act in *The Virgin of the Sun*, is for three sopranos, mezzo-soprano, and bass solo, and chorus of male voices, with accompaniment. It abounds with admirable effects of vocal combination, is clear and well varied in design, and is eminently dramatic; indeed, quite as much as the pieces already noticed from the same Opera, this finale strongly exemplifies the opinion of Bishop's artistic character, advanced in the general remarks at the beginning of the present articles, namely, that he had much natural power, which was developed by study of the best masters, especially of Mozart, even more than by the precepts of his teacher; but that he sacrificed the qualities that should have placed him in a very forward rank as a musician—sacrificed the means, almost of greatness, for the sake of momentary applause: and, aiming to meet, rather than to lead, the taste of his audiences, his entire policy, as shown in his adaptations

equally with his compositions, was to reduce everything he brought before the public to come within the capacity of the meanest comprehension; in spite of this policy, in spite of himself, his native genius is vindicated in many and many a single piece; but, had he left it unreined to follow the course of its own impulses,—had he served his art instead of his time, he might have given a lasting glory to the latter, while adding permanent riches to the former.

(To be continued.)

ROYAL ENGLISH OPERA.

MR. HATTON'S Opera, *Rose, or Love's Ransom*, was produced on the 26th November, at this establishment, and met with a success which we think may be pronounced genuine. The plot is founded upon Halevy's Opera, *Le Val d'Andorre*, and although slightly altered from the original, the effect of the music is of course marred by the constant comparison of the two composers' styles; an objection which we think fatal to a fair and legitimate judgment on the merits of a new work. The story of the abstraction of a sum of money by the heroine, to ransom her lover, who has been drawn for the conscription, is too well known to need further mention; and as it seems that for operative purposes as long as an interesting girl is placed under a ban during the progress of the work, and released from it at the end, with a joyous *finale*, the work of the *librettist* has been satisfactorily performed; we presume that Mr. Sutherland Edwards thought that the plot of *Le Val d'Andorre* would do as well as any other, and used it accordingly. Mr. Hatton is already well known as the composer of so many graceful part-songs, (to say nothing of his Cantata, *Robin Hood*) that we were led to expect that his vocal music would flow with that natural ease which distinguishes all his compositions; but we were unprepared for the facility with which the opera is instrumented, and the excellent manner in which the orchestra is used in combination with the voices. There is a charming freshness, too, about many of his melodies; and, if not original, the music is never wearisome. Unquestionably the best piece in the opera is the quartett in the first act, "Wizard, with thy wondrous skill," which is exceedingly effective, and worked out with a skill far beyond that shown in any other portion of the work, although so many of the solos and concerted pieces received an equal amount of applause, that it is impossible to say whether our opinion was shared by the majority of the audience. We must also mention the ballad, "Gentle flower, canst thou tell," (sung to perfection by Madame Lemmens-Sherrington), and the "Sleep song" a thoroughly musician-like composition, but so marred in its effect upon the audience by a monotonous, but characteristic, running accompaniment for the violoncello, that it has been since omitted. The weak parts of the opera are decidedly those in which the composer has been most ambitious, and where he has undisguisedly worked for the music-shops. The long *scenas* have all the conventional contrast of movements; but the genius is wanting that should unite these into a spontaneous composition, growing naturally from the situation. The tenor and bass ballads are cut to a pattern thoroughly worn out; and we should not be surprised if those songs that sell best are precisely those that were least expected to do so. The fatal defect of want of style, too, is observable throughout the opera. We have German *scenas*, English ballads, and French *bravura* passages so intermixed in the same scene, that the composer seems to have written in every school, to prove that the adage "union is strength" is as applicable in art as in politics. That the success of the opera is unquestionable, in spite of these drawbacks, is fully shown by its reception with the audience, not only on the first night, but on each successive representation.